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ABSTRACT

Attempts to establish relationships between the public schools and universities are often beset by difficulties in implementation. These difficulties may occur when interorganizational relationships are burdened by inadequate funding and the lack of formalized structures governing the relationship's operation. Using the Sunbelt State University and Sunbelt Public Schools as an example, the Schools Leadership Association (SLA) was formed in 1982 to combine the personnel and resources of these two organizations. This collaborative venture would provide school administrators with inservice opportunities. It would also provide preservice experience for those who want to gain the necessary skills to become a school administrator. An analysis of the data identified factors that affected the collaborative arrangement, resulting in the diminution of the university's role in the linkage. One such factor was the tenuous funding. There was no joint-powers agreement governing the relationship specifically describing the contribution from and responsibility of each organization. The absence of such an agreement is detailed. The interorganizational relationship literature provides insight into the reasons for establishing cooperative relationships and the resources required. Described are a variety of programs that the SLA is engaged in and the resulting effects of the lack of and change in funding. (RR)

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THE IMPACT OF INADEQUATE FUNDING ON A SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

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The historical relationship between the public schools and universities has been described as "problematic" and "essentially idiosyncratic" in nature (Carpenter and Mahlios, 1982, p. 339). Attempts to establish relationships are often beset by difficulties in implementation. This paper will describe those difficulties that may occur when interorganizational relationships are burdened by inadequate funding and the lack of formalized structures governing the relationship's operation.

The School Leadership Association

In April, 1982, representatives from the College of Education, Sunbelt State University (SSU), submitted a proposal to the Sunbelt Public Schools (SPS). It recommended the establishment of a relationship which would combine the personnel and resources of the two organizations. This collaborative venture, called the School Leadership Association (SLA), would provide practicing school administrators with opportunities for inservice and those who wished to be school administrators with the preservice experiences needed to achieve necessary skills.

In the past, SPS had been responsible for the continuing inservice needs of administrators, teachers, and ancillary personnel. The school district distributed available funds to the

schools, where faculty members and administrators assessed staff needs and planned unique, school-focussed inservice activities. Public school-sponsored inservice for practicing administrators was available, but never in a coherent, district-wide fashion.

Through its College of Education, the University was primarily responsible for the preservice education of aspiring teachers and administrators. Though student teachers were afforded opportunities to practice their skills in the schools, no formal structure existed within the schools to provide leadership experience for future administrators. The original proposal describing the intent of the SLA stated:

> This paper recommends a mechanism to tie more tightly the personnel and resources of SPS and the Department of Educational Administration to the creation of solutions to significant problems facing administration. These problems range from the selection of individuals for certification programs, through their training period, and to their final selection as educational administrators. (p. 2)

It was hoped that the proposed interorganizational relationship would nurture the involvement of each organization in the other's domain.

An analysis of the qualitative data (collected through analysis of documentation, interviews and participant observation) resulted in the identification of several factors which impacted on the collaborative arrangement, resulting in the diminution of the university's role in the linkage. One of these factors, and the subject of this paper, was the tenuous funding contributed to the relationship by both the university and the public schools and the impact of that insufficient funding on the objectives of the relationship. There was no joint powers agreement governing the relationship specifically describing contribu-

tions from and responsibilities of each organization. As a result, the public schools began a search for funding and turned to the business community. University representatives were, for the most part, unsuccessful in preserving their role within the newly-structured relationship, although they tried. In November, 1982, Dr. Clarke, a professor from SSU and member of the SLA council emphasized the intent of the original SLA proposal: "maximum utilization of available resources through a joint effort of SPS and Educational Administration at SSU" (minutes). Programs which shared the resources of SPS and SSU wre to be "considered most appropriate as SLA activities" (minutes).

Olivero and Armistead (1983) discussed the inadequacy of inservice opportunities for administrators: "Since principals are the key to educational improvement, incredible is the word describing the lack of inservice opportunities available to most of them. Bilingual teacher aides typically receive more inservice than most principals" (p. 103).

The superintendent of the Sunbelt Public Schools, in a discussion with an author of the proposal, an SSU professor, recognized that future resources available to the school district for continuing education would be curtailed and that the university was a potential source of aid in maintaining these programs. Aiken and Hage (1968) noted that financial distress "forces organizations to enter into more cooperative activities with other organizations" (p. 929). The university was anxious to establish a relationship to acquire the funds needed to enhance its delivery of preservice experiences.

Interorganizational Relationships

> I asked of Echo, 't other day
> (Whose words are few and often funny)
> What to a novice she could say
> Of courtship, love and matrimony?
> Quoth Echo, plainly: - "Matter-o'-money."
>
> John Godfrey Saxe

Marriage can be a useful analogy in the study of interorganizational linkages. The establishment of a relationship can be difficult unless certain conditions exist. Expectations must be met and responsibilities fulfilled in exchange for the benefits of the union.

Interorganizational relationships offer institutions in need of additional resources a valuable way to assure the maintenance or growth of the organization. The review of the interorganizational literature indicates that linkages are most successful when partner organizations are willing to sacrifice decision making autonomy and resources available to it. Formalized, highly structured cooperative arrangements result in the realization of goals that are products of the partnership itself.

Several authors describe factors that "motivate" organizations to coordinate their activities. Akinbode and Clark (1976) state that when organizations strive to serve the same clients, provide similar services, or share common resources, the need for an interdependent relationship becomes evident. Aiken and Hage (1968) suggest that organizations are "pushed" (p. 914) into interorganizational relationships in order to obtain additional resources. These resources include not only money but

"specialized skills, access to particular kinds of markets and the like" (p. 915). For example, SSU would gain access to those individuals already filling administrative roles in the public schools. Assisting the public school district in its delivery of inservice education would provide new avenues through which the practice of administration could be influenced. The authors suggest that a condition of interorganizational diversity creates a financial strain on the organization which can be relieved by the creation of a linkage with another organization.

Reid (1964) expands on those reasons for the establishment of cooperative relationships. A client pool which might be served by the organization and therefore increase revenues might be identified through the linkage. Additionally, access to needed facilities and information may also motivate the establishment of a relationship. Reid perceives interorganizational cooperative relations as a rational response to crises which face organizations. The proposal upon which the SLA was created spoke of "diminished resources" and that "new approaches are called for if we are to maintain effective schooling" (p. 2). Black and Kase (1963) described linkage attempts as a method useful in making resources stretch to meet increasing needs (p. 27).

According to Guetzkow (1966) and Evans (1966) there is another motivating factor that leads organizations into entering interorganizational relationships beside financial exigency or resource scarcity: namely, cooperating with other organizations takes on an independent positive value.

Schermerhorn (1975) suggests yet another motivator that

compels organizations to link: "powerful extra-organizational forces may "demand" the linkage (p. 849). In April, 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. The report spoke of the nation's schools as becoming increasingly mediocre and engaging in "unilateral educational disarmament" (p. 24). In order to alleviate many of the problems identified, the authors of the report advocated greater cooperation between colleges of education and school districts. The report constituted the "powerful extra-organizational force" described by Schermerhorn.

The cost of a joint venture such as the SLA can be measured in "money . . . staff, space, and time" (Aiken and Hage, 1968, p. 915). Before a partnership can be successfully initiated, each organization must be able and willing to commit the resources needed to fund the venture. Aiken and Hage describe the ability to invest in a cooperative activity as "slack" in the resources available to the organization. March and Olsen (1976) described slack as "the difference between existing resources and activated demands" (p., 87). Those institutions without slack would, accordingly, be unable to participate successfully in a joint program. SSU embarked upon the linkage with the public schools without the monies needed to finance SLA programs that would benefit the university itself. The pursuit of benefits needed by the organization necessarily involved the expenditure of financial resources, precluding their use for other projects.

Interorganizational relationships are valuable, then, because they offer institutions in need of additional resources a way to assure the maintenance or growth of the organization. Both

SSU and SPS would benefit from their relationship if money was available to fund activities which allowed each organization greater involvement in the other's traditional training responsibilities. Before a partnership can be successfully initiated, each organization must be able and willing to commit the resources needed to fund the venture.

Whetten (1981) described several different forms that interorganizational relations might assume. One of these offers some insight regarding the School Leadership Association. As its name implies, a "dyadic linkage" combines the resources of two organizations so that a goal or goals common to both may be attained. Whetten states that "joint ventures are often created to share the risk of innovation" (p. 5). These ventures are usually focussed on a specific task and exist only until the task has been completed. A joint venture may encompass the establishment of a new, separately staffed and funded organization or merely a "project" (p. 5) as a product of the linkage. The SLA could be construed to be such a project of the joint venture between the university and the public schools. Whetten went on to describe a "less formal" (p. 5) linkage: one in which a joint venture is not an outcome of the association. Of interest are the conditions inherent in this latter kind of relationship. The resources committed to the relationship are "modest" (p. 5), and because of its informal nature (there are no written decision rules or agreements specifying the degree of coordination) the relationship may lack continuity. The absence of formal agreements usually indicates that the maintenance of

the partnership is greatly dependent upon the personalities that originally initiated and developed the linkage. In the absence of one or more of these personalities, the relationship may end. Each of the characteristics associated with the "less formal dyaydic relationship" occurred to some degree within the relationship between SSU and SPS, yet, unlike the formal linkage, the relationship produced the SLA, a joint project.

Whetten goes on to describe some of the work of Adams (1976) and Clark (1965). These authors developed a schema illustrating "coordinating structures" (Whetten, p. 11) found in interorganizational relationships. "Mutual adjustment" (p. 11) like the concept of informal dyadic linkage, is associated with minimal resource commitment and an emphasis on specific, short term goals rather than long term, more general goal achievement. As found in the SLA, mutual adjustment was evident in the minimal expenditure of resources. Each participating organization remained totally autonomous, and the benefits related to the linkage were very limited. Unlike the SLA, a mutual adjustment structure most usually makes use of an agreement specifying how the partnership will be managed.

Whetten provides a guide for the creation of an interorganizational relationship: 1) objectives should be identified, 2) the exchange of resources must be specifically described and 3) a plan must be developed that describes the responsibilities to be fulfilled by each participant. The SLA's general objectives were identified, but neither a formal description of resources to be exchanged nor a description of the participant's responsibilities were ever developed.

Tenuous Funding

The SLA proposal asked that $50,000 be allocated from the SPS budget "to carry out the SLA's first year of planning and activities. In actuality, $40,000 was earmarked for the SLA's operation, entirely from the public schools. The proposal recommended that the SLA's first year be one of planning, yet asked that programs be implemented because of a "sense of urgency" (p. 5) in providing inservice for the district's administrators. Those activities planned by the SLA council (composed of representatives from SPS and SSU) are described below:

> Fellows Program: "a program providing school principals with an unencumbered period of time for renewal and the opportunity to pursue a specified set of professional interests" (informational brochure). The brochure identified an application process which called for the "identification of resource persons (normally a member of the Department of Educational Administration, SSU)".
>
> Institutes and Workshops: short-term (often less than one day) inservice opportunities based on data from assessment instruments distributed to the district's principals and assistant principals. An SSU faculty member was invited to speak at these functions only once in three years.
>
> Principals' Support Groups: intended to focus on "issues of instructional relevance to building administrators and provide the medium for principals to share, with one another, ideas and solutions regarding instructional programs" (SLA Status Report to the Board, April, 1983).
>
> Administrative Internships: The purpose of this program was to "enhance the preservice training of future school administrators through an intensive, closely supervised field-

based experience prior to assuming an administrative position" (proposal, December, 1982). Supervision of these preservice students was to be the responsibility of both SSU and the school district. The school administrator providing the site for the clinical experience would have primary day-to-day responsibility and an SSU faculty member would be rsponsible for submitting grades.

Sabbaticals: Like the Fellows Program, the Sabbatical Program would provide principals and assistant principals with the "opportunity to pursue a specified set of professional interests based on his/her needs" (proposal, December, 1982). Sabbaticals would be granted for periods of a year or single semesters, depending on the candidate's application. This program, like the Fellows Proposal, asked that resource persons be identified "(normally, but not exclusively a member of the Department of Educational Administration, SSU)" (proposal).

By January of the 1982-1983 school year, the SLA's $40,000 budget had been withdrawn in an attempt to preserve funds: the state government had experienced a severe revenue "shortfall" affecting all of the state's educational institutions. Activities planned by the SLA's governing council would be examined on an individual basis and funded at the discretion of the superintendent of schools. As a result of this, planned programs which would have heavily involved university facilities and personnel were postponed. The chairman of the council, an assistant superintendent with the public schools asked that the council prioritize all planned programs. As funding became available, each program would be implemented. The university was still unable to find any financial "slack" within its organization to fund any of the SLA's programs. Soon after, the search for financial support from other organizations began, at the urging of the superintendent. The "private sector" was suggested as a source of additional funding. In addition, the council was

urged to pursue federal Chapter II money. The quest for additional financial support was on: there was almost none coming from the university.

In August, 1984, the council learned that Chapter II funds had been granted: $28,000, much less than the $40,000 originally requested. The Fellows Program, Principals' Support Groups, and the Institute concept would be funded, albeit at lower levels than originally intended. Only the Fellows Program held any promise of university involvement. The Administrative Internship Program, the SLA's only preservice activity and one spearheaded by SSU would not be funded.

The 1983-1984 school year brought an even stronger relationship between SPS and the business community. The search for financial support was "paying off" in business-sponsored programs and services.

In September, 1983, the Dean of the SSU College of Education described a Clinical Professorship Program, one in which a candidate (from SPS) would split time between teaching duties at SSU and working with SLA-related endeavors. The cost of the position would be shared by SSU and SPS. By August, 1984, the Clinical Professorship Program had not been implemented. Nothing had been heard from the Dean regarding the university's financial commitment to the program.

In September, 1984, SLA council representatives suggested that the SLA "piggyback" with other organizations, jointly sponsoring events and sharing costs. The Sunbelt City Junior League had been contacted, and though this shared function never occurred, it illustrates well the continuing efforts to obtain

funding from the community. In October, 1984, a "Kick-Off Breakfast" gained financial support from the local chamber of commerce. A triangular logo was adopted for the occasion, with the business community given full recognition as a partner in the interorganizational relationship.

Ultimately, The university's involvement in SLA programs was limited to a few Institutes; the Administrative Internship Program was never implemented and the Fellows Program never involved SSU faculty as resources.

In an interview, a council member serving as a high school principal with the district commented that people in contact with the SLA and its activities

> seldom realize the university started it. The structure and purpose tend to swing to SPS: funding, members (on the council), the chairmanship and the client group. Preservice supporters aren't vocal. Activities skew toward SPS. When the university says "where are we in all of this?", I say "Why do you ask?". (personal communication, June, 1984)

The concept of dowry provides a striking analogy. Most commonly practiced in Europe, the custom of providing a newly-married couple with a dowry served a valuable purpose. The money and goods contributed by the bride's family enabled a young couple to "set up house". Beals and Hoijer (1966) state: "dowry united the families of the bride and groom in an endeavor to provide the best possible economic base for marriage, and to insure its permanence and success" (p. 532). Commonly, worries about money are the greatest source of stress for a married couple. Lessening that tension would eliminate a major cause of troubled marriages. Just as a dowry may prove to be an invaluable financial aid to the bride and groom, a substantial commitment of

resources from each linking organization might insure the success of a budding interorganizational "marriage".

The data regarding the tenuous funding of the SLA and the impact of this funding on its activities, suggest the following propositions:

> If a linking institution fails to make equitable financial contributions toward an interorganizational relationship, the likelihood of its diminished role in that relationship is enhanced.
>
> If adequate financial support of an interorganizational relationship cannot be maintained, new partners will be sought in an attempt to obtain needed resources.

The Absence of a Joint Powers Agreement

Whetten (1981) described interorganizational agreements as "an effective means of gaining control over uncertain environmental conditions" (p. 3). Certainly, the creation of the SLA, a "joint venture" of the university and the public schools, was affected by a set of "uncertain environmental conditions". The informal linkage described by Whetten utilizes no written agreements. Rather, the relationship is based upon the personal power of the individuals initiating the linkage. As those individuals leave their organizations, the dyadic linkage is at risk, with no written agreement on which to base shared decision making. In August, 1982, the chairman of the SLA's governing council stated that the SLA had been given "the full support of the superintendent and . . . high priority by him and the SPS board of education" (minutes). As chair of the council, he reported to the superintendent and the board, describing the

activity initiated by the SLA. When the SLA's original allocation of $40,000 was rescinded, the superintendent decided which of the council's proposed activities would be financed. A formal, written agreement did not govern the relationship. The linkage was controlled, to a great extent, by the superintendent. With the departure of the superintendent in January, 1985, the structure of the SLA changed significantly. It was no longer a distinct, organizational entity. The SLA was incorporated by the public schools under the direction of a newly-organized inservice unit.

There are reasons, then, for a written agreement to be devised and implemented. Highly-structured cooperative arrangements often result in the achievement of goals that may be met only through a partnership.

The SLA proposal, written by faculty members from SSU and describing quite generally what the SLA was to accomplish, was not a functional joint agreement. Macauley (1963) in his study of non-contractual relations in business wrote: An attorney and an auditor both stated that most contract disputes arise because of ambiguity in the specifications" (p. 58). The key word here is "ambiguity". The original proposal, though not intended to serve as a contract, was often referred to by university representatives on the council when the university's goals were left unmet. The proposal was a source of ambiguity because it did not delineate, in detail, those components adressed in an agreement

> outlining the objects to be accomplished, specifying the flow of resources between participating organizations, establishing a structural arrangement to guide the flow of resources, and finally, outlining a concrete plan for work

that specifies each participant's responsibilities. (Whetten, 1981, p. 19)

Evan (1963) described those interorganizational conditions in which a contractual agreement would be needed. One of these would seem to have value in its application to the SLA: "The greater the bargaining position differential between the organizations, the more likely their transactions will be contractual in nature" (p. 68). The "bargaining differential" discussed by Evan could be applied to the basic differences between the SLA's partners and what they brought to the relationship. With the exception of one-half of a graduate assistant's salary paid during the SLA's first year and $700 for a year-ending banquet, the university provided no budgeted, financial sponsorship of programs or activities. The university was at a disadvantage in that respect when decisions concerning preservice programs were made.

A written agreement identifies the number of representatives from each organization to be seated on a governing board, financial contributions, responsibilities and roles to be filled as well as specific goals to be achieved through the partnership. An agreement could prohibit the creation of an activity that did not include the participation of a partner, such as the Principals' Support Groups or the deletion of a statement in the brochure describing the Fellows Program which stipulated involvement of university faculty.

Wedding vows and recently, prenuptial agreements, address the need for commitment to a relationship. In either case, specific rights and responsibilities of both partners are formally agreed

upon. The traditional vows state that the relationship will continue "for better or worse". This protects the integrity of the "linkage" and guarantees, to a certain extent, the viability of the relationship.

Given the financial constraints placed upon the university's involvement in the linkage, could SSU have entered into into an interorganizational relationship governed by a specific, written agreement? Organizational slack was defined earlier in this paper by March and Olsen (1976): "the difference between existing resources and activated demands" (p. 87). Those organizations without resources to "invest" in a linkage will be unable to participate successfully in a joint program. The university entered the relationship without slack. Would the public schools agree (in writing) to serve the goals of the university without a financial commitment from SSU? Would the public schools be willing to sacrifice decision making autonomy without a sizeable financial contribution to justify the loss of that autonomy?

The discussion of interorganizational governance through written agreements suggests the following proposition:

> If an institution enters an interorganizational relationship without benefit of a written agreement specifying contributions, responsibilities, and role, the goals specific to the linkage may go unmet.

Summary

It is apparent that the university's interorganizational relationship with the public schools would have met with greater success if certain elements had been present in the linkage.

A written, joint agreement, describing each organization's

responsibilities, stipulating roles, and specifying financial contributions is central to the success of a linkage. Without it, the goals to be achieved through the partnership can, as in the case of the SLA, be poorly defined. Those stated in the SLA's original proposal, lacking formal, written agreement, could not be enforced. Those linkages based on personal power of key participants may fail if those individuals leave their organizations. Perhaps, in the absence of financial contributions, even those relationships founded on the strength of individual personality will become dysfunctional.

Organizations entering into an interorganizational relationship must be prepared to make a financial commitment to the partnership. If conflict in organizations is "resolved through bargaining" (Cohen et al. p. 2), the university, in a weakened bargaining position (through its inability to generate slack within the organization) would not be able to effectively bargain with the public schools to achieve its goals.

Wedding vows provide a couple with a socially recognized, binding set of expectations. Pre-nuptial agreements, increasingly in vogue, specifically identify the roles to be filled by each individual. Dowry, in its traditional sense, allowed a young couple to establish their new relationship without worries about financial support. The SLA, a partnership between two organizations suffered from the absence of binding marriage vows and the inability to generate a dowry needed to help the relationship grow in ways that benefitted all of those concerned.

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